

**Remarks Ness County Veterans Memorial
Given at Ceremonies in Ness City, Kansas**

by Congressman Jerry Moran

June 4, 2005

Let me say how humbled I am to be here for this special observance. I join you to dedicate this memorial which will forever stand as a monument to the soldiers from Ness County who sacrificed their lives in service to their nation. The group of Americans which I hold in highest regard is our veterans, exceeded only by those veterans who honor and serve other veterans. So I express my appreciation and esteem for those who contributed time and money to see that the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines of Ness County are remembered this day and each day hereafter.

It is important that we to pay tribute to the men and women of Beeler, Utica, Ransom, Arnold, McCracken, Ness City and Bazine who answered the call in service to their country and to expose our children and grandchildren to the sacrifices others have made. Earlier this week we celebrated Memorial Day, which became a national holiday in order that America might "encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity."

To the veterans of Ness County and each of their families, let me express thanks. Because of their service and their family's sacrifice we live in the strongest, freest, greatest nation in the history of the world. We live with the blessing of freedom they fought, suffered and died for. We are the benefactors of their courage, their commitment to duty, and their deaths.

Let us ever be grateful.

Today's dedication and the recognition of the county's fallen soldiers are particularly important because our nation is at war. Today, as we gather here to honor those who served in the past, a new generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are halfway around the world. Our thoughts and prayers are with these men and women as they fight to keep our world safe and free. They fight, like the veterans of our past wars, for the *cause* of freedom and the promise of peace.

Life is God's most precious gift. We honor those who gave their lives for the good of their country. The lives of these men and women provide us with the meaning of this dedication ceremony far better than any comments a Congressman could make.

Our country has had many wars in its history. It is remarkable that from the revolutionary war to today, we have been blessed by men and women willing to sacrifice God's gift of life. But we know that the cause for which they gave their lives is worthy. Freedom is worth death, for without freedom, life loses its meaning. Love of liberty exceeds love of life. We are thankful that individuals of each generation have been willing to serve, that they would risk everything to allow their children and grandchildren the opportunity to live in freedom.

Today, there is concern about the absence of heroes. If people have no heroes, it is because we are looking for heroes in the wrong places. We look on the baseball diamonds and the basketball courts and on the stages of Hollywood and in sold out amphitheaters of rock music concerts.

Those we honor this morning, they are our heroes. And when we thought heroes might be a thing of the past, God continues to provide us with more.

To often, Washington, D.C. needs a reminder of what is important - that it is not polls, partisan politics or the next election. Sometimes in Washington, the important things in life are too easily forgotten. When I need a reminder of what really matters I'll take a walk - from the nation's capitol to the Lincoln Memorial. Between these two points I will pass the Washington Monument, the Vietnam Wall, the Korean War Memorial and now the WWII Memorial. These memorials and monuments to our country's great leaders and to its everyday citizen soldiers put everything in proper perspective.

Our system of government, our way of life, our liberties are so important that men and women are willing to die to defend and preserve them for the next generation of Americans. The strength of our nation lies with it's citizens. Only when each citizen feels duty bound to defend America, is our nation secure. The memorial on this courthouse square, just like the memorials in our nation's capital, honor those citizens who recognized duty to country.

President George Washington wrote, "the willingness of future generations to serve in our military will be directly dependent upon how we have treated those who have served in the past." So on this Saturday morning we meet, not only to remember those who died in military service, but to also demonstrate to future generations that service to country will not be forgotten.

We must resolve to take the steps necessary to preserve our country and protect its citizens. Those who served in our country's past wars gave us not freedom, but the opportunity for freedom. The battle to preserve our liberty must be fought by every generation each day. We have said good bye to many Kansans during the last year-- active military, reservists and members of the National Guard. Once again our fathers, mothers, daughters and sons have answered the call to duty. Once again we have our heroes.

Let us ask God to watch over these heroes and bring them safely home. This community by the building and dedication of the Veterans Memorial honors those who now lay in their final resting place - all who served. We thank God for giving us the gift of life, and also for the gift of heroes.

God bless our veterans and the country we love.